



# SOUTHEAST NEWS

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## "I Have a Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy ... Down In My Soul"

"Joy" was truly celebrated at Annual Conference this summer at Cullman! Rev. Bob Kurtz, his staff and congregation are to be commended and thanked for surrounding delegates (and all attendees) with truly joyous activities, atmosphere, food and programming.

Everyone comes away from "Conference" with some special memory. As the weekend closed, there were praises raised for the keynote speakers, Don Gall and Bernice Powell Jackson. Many enjoyed the special music, singing, "hand-bell" choir, and performances by the children.

Perhaps the most moving event of the weekend was the Service of Communion on Saturday evening led by "Sozo" the Clown (a.k.a. the Rev. Mr. Karl K. Whiteman, pastor of First United Church in Belvidere, TN) and assisted by "Springs" (a.k.a. Barbara Everett, also of First UC in Belvidere).

*Why a Clown?* Karl explains, "My life as a Christian Clown began in 1985 with the formation of a 'liturgical-mime' Clown Troupe in Grandville, Michigan. At that time, the same questions were raised ... The word CLOWN comes from the Anglo-Saxon word 'clod,' which is a lump of earth. No matter how you interpret the opening chapters of Genesis, it always comes out the same way. God loved a clod, breathed life into it and people happened. The closest word in the New Testament is the word for servant—lowly, unimportant, disrespected person who did the work which no one else would do. Jesus calls us to be servants (or clowns) [Matthew 20:26-28 & Mark 9:35] if we are to know what the kingdom of God is all about. We are called to 'be fools for Christ's sake ...'

"Clowns somehow remind people that they are human, and that's all right! As they use exaggerations and symbols to demonstrate some basic and essential truths, they stand with the prophets of old who let people know that there are important things and truths which should not be taken for granted. Jesus taught in parables and the use of symbolic messages was evident throughout the ministry of Jesus. The Clown Worship Experience seeks to use these techniques to center our hearts and minds upon the message of God's love."

The Communion Service led by "SOZO" will remain in this writer's memory for a long time to come.

## **Southeast Conference Organized Flood Response**

After Hurricane Andrew, it was suggested that all UCC conferences establish Disaster Response organizations for any emergency that can arise. Under the direction of Ms. Linda Petrucelli of the United Church Board for World Ministries, the Southeast Conference will use the newly developed organization as the springboard for our disaster program.

The SEC Disaster Coordinator draws leadership from each association to form a strong Disaster Response committee. This enables immediate, direct contact and coordination to occur among the wider United Church of Christ, or local churches and persons in need.

When the rains came, people wanted to help: calls came from everywhere. Mitch Johnson, Lester Ariail and the Southeast Conference office began to sort it out. With ecumenical partners, the Board of Directors and Southeast Conference leadership, the following plan was adopted. Anne Ariail was named acting coordinator of the 1994 UCC flood disaster response. An office was established at 933 Highland Terrace, Macon, Georgia, 31201-2118. Phone number, (912) 742-4151. FAX (Ariail Financial Arrangement), (912) 742-3984. AFManagement has also given us time on the computer.

David O'Rourke, our Partner Conference in Mission and Flood Coordinator in Iowa, came to advise/organize and brought a \$22,000 check from Iowa. David's words of encouragement and wisdom are greatly appreciated as we experience his truth: providing long-term assistance to crisis victims is crucial.

Our preparedness enables us together to affirm, "To Believe is to Care, to Care is to Do" when emergencies arise. Thanks to all!!!

*NOTE:* What to know more? Want to help? See article *UCC at Work* in this paper.

## **Conference Minister's Message**

### **"Does Your Church Have a Future?"**

is a question every congregation regularly faces, simply by being a church. It is existential as to whether we are committed and evangel-outreaching-and-inclusive; it is theological as to whether resurrection as Christ's Body is more realistic than death, cynicism and anomie. The question is very real for many churches today.

As I have met with each of our Southeast Conference churches these six years, I have approached every church very intentionally with this perspective-question behind each meeting or visit, "Does this church have a future?" It is not a judgmental or threatening approach; rather it is to hopefully discover with the church those life-giving forces of faith and to identify and address the blockages—in other words, it is to engage in transformation. It has always been my conviction that God calls every church to be the resurrection community by being inclusive (evangelism) and living into the future. As the writer of Hebrews states, "let us lay aside every weight of sin that clings so closely (and) ... look to Jesus,

who for the joy set before him ..." Jesus' impact was described by a laywoman, "To live as though what can be already is." Is there a future for your church?

However, churches are dying, some due to external causes but most often by their own choice. Oh, no church would say that, but by what happens and doesn't happen, they choose death. A few examples that indicate an attitude of closedness:

We don't want to be bigger than we are (i.e., we don't want anyone);

We'd like to have more people, but they are accustomed to other ways;

We can't get enough teachers now, so how could we handle more kids?

If people were only committed today like when we were younger.

Declining membership for many churches, according to Lyle Schaller, is because "most churches are located where people were but are not now; and they need to relocate to where people are." In short ...

If churches have no sense of mission, death is already knocking.

If churches have not music in their life, or joy in their soul, who wants to come?

If churches only get any warm body they can get to preach, or the cheapest sermon-seller instead of a trained minister, in order to survive, they won't! (Being a church is so much more than being a preaching station!)

These are not easy days for churches and clergy. Some churches are being torn apart; clergy are struggling in these changing times. There are no magic solutions or easy guarantees; churches are to be accepting communities of good news, and clergy to call the church to be faithful in mission.

The good news we have is the eternal message of death and resurrection. There are churches who "turn the corner and turn it around." More are realizing that mission is the source of their future, and that those who live only in isolation and to themselves, have no future. In the United Church of Christ, "the basic unit of church life is the local church," and through our covenantal ties, the mission of Jesus' Church comes alive everywhere when it's alive in your church. The Conference, as churches together, exists to help churches respond to the calling of Christ for their future. So, "your church does have a future, if ..."

God bless.

Sincerely,  
Roger Knight

## Not too Late for Make A Difference Campaign!

As you may know, the official, phased "Make-A-Difference" campaign ends with the April-June phase (the general appeal to all members). Even so, did you know that you can still have a campaign and have your church counted? One person will remain on the campaign staff in Cleveland through June 1995. So you can have a campaign this summer, this fall, or this winter! And still be counted!

To date, we have commitments in the SEC of over \$213,000 toward our Challenge Goal of \$250,000 (having exceeded our Basic Goal of \$125,000!)

Remember, if we reach the Challenge Goal of \$250,000, one half will come back to our Conference. The churches which have thus far reported no participation could easily put us beyond the Challenge Goal!

Here is the urgent thing: if your congregation is going to participate, PLEASE, immediately, fill in a Covenant form, indicating when you plan to campaign and your hoped-for goal and mail it to the Cleveland office. This goal, please understand, is not a church pledge for which your church will be billed. But it will help the national office to know where things stand in the national picture. And it will allow your church to be counted, even though the final phase is over. The Covenant form was mailed to all pastors some time ago. If you can't find it, let me know and I will mail you one. Don't hesitate to call me if you need further information.

Be amongst those who are making a difference as the United Church of Christ moves toward the awesome challenges of the soon-to-dawn new century!

John R. Lackey  
SEC Campaign Director  
Phone: 615-690-3123

## **Theme for UCC, Southeast Conference Women's Retreat—“*She Has Done What She Could ...*”**

All of us need a chance to stop and allow ourselves to be renewed and enriched for our work in the world. Join with other women from the Southeast Conference for a fall retreat to be held at the Shocco Springs Conference Center in Talladega, Alabama, October 7-9, 1994.

The Keynote speaker will be Rev. Helen Bruch Pearson, a minister of the United Church of Christ and a member of Central Congregational UCC in Atlanta. She is Dean for Community Life at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, and author of *Do What You Have the Power to Do: Studies of Six New Testament Women*, and has written many articles and curriculum studies as well.

Cost of this retreat will be \$56 to \$86, depending on your housing choice.

Registration forms are available from your church office, from the Conference office, from Rev. Joyce Myers-Brown at 404-876-2421 or from Martha Lammers, registrar, at 615-277-3386.

## ***Our rivers are below flood state, our houses have been scraped out and now we wait ... UCC AT WORK***

Recently, Lester and I represented you at the Interfaith Flood Relief Meeting in Perry, Georgia. The American Red Cross, Georgia Emergency Management Agency (EMA – the late Civil Defense), Family and Children Services, Red Cross representative to FEMA, and United Way presented short summaries of their expertise. I had met with the American Red Cross and phoned each of the EMA

representatives in flooded areas of Georgia. All disabling flood damages were contained in the Middle and South Georgia areas.

The Southeast Conference is setting up a response office here at 933 Highland Terrace, Macon, Georgia, 31201-2118. Phone (912) 742-4151, FAX number (912) 742-3984. Flood-related calls to the Macon number. Please make checks to the SECUCC Flood Relief and send to Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ, 756 West Peachtree St. N.W., Atlanta, Georgia 30308.

The clean-up phase of the disaster is completed. Three weeks of drying out is required, and is time for organizing and securing materials and/or funds. Each "UCCer at work" can help by forming volunteer work crews and inventorying your talents, numbers and dates available. We also need to know what kinds of equipment/materials you may wish to donate/have for your personal use (hammers, etc.)

If you like a (working) vacation in the heart of Georgia this year, you can contact for dates and place to work and what to bring.

Each work crew will be responsible for financing its transportation, living/eating accommodations, clothing and labeled hand tools. Large materials are being donated or purchased locally. The Iowa and Missouri flood relief programs have been most generous with left over materials and/or funds.

If you have any experience in painting, drywall, plumbing, electrical, masonry, wood work, clean-up, roofing or insulation, please consider forming a work crew from your area and join your southern neighbors on a fun work vacation this fall in soggy Middle Georgia. We have one volunteer retired professional. *ARE THERE OTHERS OUT THERE?*

We love and appreciate each of you.

Anne Ariail

## **SEC—A Vital Future! *The Structures Committee***

What is God calling us to be and do and become here as the churches of the SEC? That is the question behind the work of the Structures Committee, chaired by the Rev. Truman Moore. Your participation is essential.

At the association meetings members of the Committee will present their findings. Then each *church* will be asked to respond to basic questions about our common calling as Christ's body here in the Southeast. You will receive materials for your church discussion this fall, to be returned by December.

The results will be formulated for sharing with churches in early '95. Contact the committee chairperson with any question or suggestions: Truman Moore, 2424 King Arthur Circle, Atlanta 30345; (404) 934-2881.

## **National UCC Responds to Local Needs**

Several Alabama newspapers carried the story, "Church Women Turn Over Grant to Russell's 'haven' for Women," and "Annex Shelter for Battered Women Opens," and "Battered Women's Shelter Expands in Russell County."

Prompting these articles was the recent \$2,000 donation presented to the Russell County (AL) Shelter for Battered Women which was given by the United Church of Christ Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society. Presenting the check was Harvetta Barr, president of the East Alabama/West Georgia Women's Fellowship, who applied for and received the grant from the National UCC in Cleveland, Ohio.

**\*\*WORKSHOP\*\* \*\*WORKSHOP\*\* \*\*WORKSHOP\*\***  
**MOVING BEYOND CONFLICT IN THE CHURCH**

The Alabama-Tennessee Association, SEC, is presenting a workshop on dealing constructively with conflict within the local church. Charles McCollough of the Office for Church in Society, UCC, will lead the workshop and offer tools for dealing creatively with conflict personally, and especially in the church.

This is an introductory series of presentations of real stories of personal and church conflicts and how churches have successfully resolved the conflicts. In addition to case studies and short lectures, participants will have the opportunity to practice the skills of resolving their own conflicts on whatever level they choose to practice. No one will be put on the spot. But everyone will be able to dig into real issues and begin to develop skills that work so that everybody wins. Instead of win/lose, fight/flight or attack/withdraw, you will learn skills in which everybody gains and nobody loses.

**PLACE:** DuBose Conference Center, Monteagle, Tennessee  
**DATE:** Friday evening, November 11, 1994 and Saturday, November 12, 1994  
**COSTS:** Registration, \$10.00; Room, \$17.50; Meals, \$19.00  
*or separately:*  
Breakfast, \$3.00; Lunch, \$7.50; Dinner, \$8.50

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN THIS WORKSHOP AND WOULD LIKE FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

Paula Van Natta  
2208 Burningtree Drive, Decatur, AL 35603  
Phone: 205-351-9269, FAX: 205-729-1089

***CHURCH PROFILE***

***Good Hope Congregational Christian Church***

Good Hope Congregational Christian Church was organized in June of 1922 in Baker, Florida. First services were held under a brush arbor and later in the one-room Stanley School House. The present church was built in the early '40s and is located on Highway 4, seven miles west of Baker and some thirty-seven miles from Fort Walton Beach. A Christian Endeavor Society was organized in 1925 and was successful in raising funds to buy the first piano-style organ for the church. Address for the church is Route 1, Box 195, Baker, FL 32531.

## ***Called to Care ...***

### **RESPONDING TO HATE GROUPS**

#### ***Remember Leo Frank?***

#### **COULD IT HAPPEN TODAY? WHAT WOULD YOU DO?**

***Who are Hate Groups? How can your church respond when they come to your community? Want answers? Lively discussion?***

Then join us and a representative from the Center for Democratic Renewal. We'll look at activities of the Klan, Christian identity, Aryan Youth, white supremacists, homophobia, and the resources/responses available.

**Saturday, October 22nd, 1994  
Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta, Georgia**

To receive an information brochure, call Houston Wheeler at (404) 624-9079.

*Sponsored by the GA-SC Association Social Justice Committee.*

## ***"THE NEW CENTURY HYMNAL"***

You all may recall how joyfully we sang at the Conference Annual Meeting at Cullman, singing from *The New Century Hymnal* sampler. Mrs. Elizabeth Rice, music director at Central Congregational Church in Atlanta, attended the National UCC meeting of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries to train someone from each conference on the use of the new hymnal.

Liz is available to come, or arrange for, singing from the *Hymnal* at the association meetings. Please contact her soon, at Central Church, 2676 Clairmont Road N.E., Atlanta, GA 30329. Phone (404) 633-4505. Ms. Joyce Johnson of Spelman College and First Congregational, Atlanta, was on the Hymnal Committee and is available also for introduction of the music.

Liz would also be interested in developing a workshop for church music leaders, musicians and pastors. Let her know of your interest.

## ***Youth Coordinator—Tim Klein***

With great excitement, Ms. Yubenia Prigmore, Christian Education Commission Chairperson, announced the appointment of Mr. Tim Klein as SEC Youth Coordinator beginning September 1 for one year. This position is funded by Visions '91 funds.

Tim comes highly qualified, and is presently Youth Minister at St. John's UCC, Cullman, Alabama.

## **CHURCH & PEOPLE NOTES**

After being "commissioned" on Sunday, August 28th, Dick and Trudy Braun will leave for a mission assignment in Nepal. They will work with the staff of a UCC-sponsored mission hospital for six months. From Nepal, they will go to Africa to revisit their former mission home in Ghana.

Herb Young, Langdale (AL), resigned to accept a call to North Carolina.

Jim Smalley was called to Nashville, First, beginning in August.

Rodney Franklin, Mt. Zion UCC, Cleveland, OH, was called to Birmingham, First, beginning in November.

Robert Warden left Waverly (TN) UCC.

Barbara Embry left Alpine (AL), King's Chapel.

Hubert Terry left Robbins Parish in Tennessee.

Robert Sherard retired from Savannah, First.

Barry Mick has been called as associate, Trinity, Jonesboro.

Maureen Jenci-Shelton resigned at Center Church, Atlanta, to assume a full-time chaplaincy.

Don Nelson has been called to Center Church.

Roger Vonland is serving East Tallassee (AL) Church.

Susan Newman was called to Atlanta, First.

## **HOLY LAND TOURS, 1994 & 1995 Travel With an Added Dimension**

**Holy Land Tour  
Departing from Atlanta, Georgia  
November 12-22, 1994**

**For educational opportunities and world travel with a purpose, contact Rev. Fred Mills, P.O. Box 6, LaGrange College, LaGrange, GA 30240. Phone: (706) 884-1922.**

*Sponsored by Church Growth and Development Committee, East Alabama-West Georgia Association, SEC, UCC  
Deadline is September 12th.*

***Can't Go That Soon?***

*Then you may want to plan for a*

**HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE**

**February 6-16, 1995. Tour leaders are Rev. Karl K. and Jan Whiteman, First United Church, UCC, Belvidere, TN.**

*For more information call (615) 967-0380 or write Rev. Whiteman at 4071 Owl Hollow Road, Belvidere, TN 37306-2611.*

**UCC NOMINATIONS**

The UCC Nominating Committee seeks names of persons active in the United Church of Christ who would serve responsible on the Directorate of various instrumentalities and agencies of the UCC. Please suggest names, with biographical information, to the Southeast Conference Nominating Committee, c/o the Conference Minister. All data and names must be received by November 1, 1994 at the Conference Office.

**CONFERENCE CALENDAR, 1994-5**

Sep. 9-10	AL/TN Association Meeting, Belvidere
Sep. 16-17	GA/SC Association Annual Meeting, Savannah
Sep. 23-24	Board of Directors Meeting
Oct. 1	SoAL/NWFL Association Annual Meeting
Oct. 7-9	Southeast Women's Retreat, Shocco Springs, AL
Oct. 15	EAL/WGA Association Annual Meeting, Oak Grove, Pine Mountain
Oct. 22	Responding to Hate Groups Seminary, Marietta, GA
Nov. 11-12	Moving Beyond Conflict Workshop, Monteagle, TN
Nov. 18-19	All-Conference Program Planning Event
Apr. 28-30	Mini-Camp, Laguna Beach, FL

# **THE SOUTHEAST NEWS**

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Conference Minister, Roger D. Knight

Associate Conference Minister, Mitchell C. Johnson

Office Administrator, Rhonda Fowler

Moderator, Richard Sales

Vice Moderator, Annie Neal

Secretary, Jan Whiteman

Treasurer, Lester Ariail

Alabama-Tennessee Association Moderator, William (Bill) Chew

East Alabama-West Georgia Association Moderator, Jimmy Pilkington

Georgia-South Carolina Association Moderator, Roger Vonland

South Alabama-Northwest Florida Association Moderator, Jim Courtney

Publication schedule: February, May, August, October, December

Editor, Shirley W. Bowen

(404) 607-1993 (phone)

(404) 607-7939 (FAX)

Mail news and other material to:

Shirley W. Bowen

P.O. Box 340

Franklin, GA 30217

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PROJECT

